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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 003651

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#)

SUBJECT: HAMAS STAKES OUT TOUGH LINE ON NATIONAL UNITY
GOVERNMENT

REF: JERUSALEM 03624

Classified By: A/Principal Officer Tom Duffy, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Hamas representatives have staked out a tough position on the creation of a new national unity government (NUG) in public statements following the August 16 agreement between PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyeh to begin negotiations on such a government. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Secretary General insisted that the PLC would not hold a confidence vote on a new government until arrested Hamas PLC members and cabinet ministers were released. Other Hamas sources have placed conditions on the creation of a government that, if fulfilled, would ensure the new government failed to meet Quartet requirements. END SUMMARY.

NO VOTE UNTIL DETAINED OFFICIALS FREED

¶2. (C) Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Secretary General Mahmoud al-Ramahi publicly clarified Hamas's position on the creation of a national unity government following talks between Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyeh and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) on August 16 (reftel). Al-Ramahi announced that the PLC will not hold a confidence vote for any new government prior to the release of imprisoned Hamas ministers and PLC members. Al-Ramahi pointed out that this PLC position does not contradict Haniyeh and Abu Mazen's agreement that negotiations on a new NUG would take place simultaneously with efforts to release the imprisoned Hamas officials because, in his view, consultations and an actual change in the current cabinet are two distinct issues.

CONDITIONS FOR A NEW CABINET

¶3. (U) In further clarification of the agreement announced August 16, Hamas sources have told the media that there are several conditions for the formation of a NUG. These include a Hamas official as the head of the cabinet, assigning portfolios in proportion to PLC seats (where Hamas has a significant majority), and a political program based upon the Prisoner's Document.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) The current Hamas position tracks with the initial offers Hamas made after the January 2006 PLC elections to create a NUG, and Hamas sources have reportedly expressed the hope that the creation of a NUG would help lift the international sanctions currently imposed upon the Palestinian Authority. The conditions they have insisted upon for the creation of the government, however, mitigate against that goal. A national unity government created under these conditions would fail to meet the Quartet requirements.

